

Long Hunter State Park History

For about ten thousand years prior to white exploration and settlement in the eighteenth century, prehistoric Native Americans ranged over what is now Long Hunter State Park. The Middle Tennessee region, contested by Cherokee, Creek and Shawnee Indians, was known as the Middle Hunting Ground.

During the mid-1760's, just after the French and Indian War, the territory west of the Appalachian Mountains was opened for hunting and settlement. English, French, Irish and Germans were the first Europeans to venture into this part of the New World's western frontier. Colonists from Virginia, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, to which Tennessee belonged, came here on yearlong expeditions to hunt deer, otter, beaver and elk for trade with the Cherokee. These skilled woodsmen became known as long hunters, the most famous of whom was Daniel Boone of Kentucky.

Long hunters in this region worked either alone or in parties of up to thirty men out of fortified farmsteads called stations. In 1767 long hunter Uriah Stone explored the river that now bears his name. A story is told that along the meandering stream an incident occurred where Stone had all of his hides stolen from him by a French hunting companion, and it was so named because of the escapade.

Other area creeks and streams were named by long hunters and retain them today. Mansker Creek was named for Kasper Mansker, a German settler who built a frontier station near present-day Goodlettsville, just north of Nashville.

Stone's River was impounded in the mid-1960's to form J. Percy Priest Lake. Long Hunter, consisting of about 2600 acres, is situated in three units along the lakeshore and opened as a state park in 1978. The Couchville, Baker's Grove and Bryant Grove units are named for distinct farming communities, now mostly inundated by the reservoir. Bryant Grove was named for farmer Sherrod Bryant. In the 1850's, Bryant was one of Tennessee's wealthiest black landowners.

Today, hikers may see stone remnants of some early homesteads, standing in mute testimony to area's rural beginnings.